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ABSTRACT

Developing literacy skills at the preschool level is a crucial foundation for continued success in school environments; nevertheless, questions about when and how to teach beginning reading and writing are among the most controversial topics in early childhood education. As part of a series of works examining strategies for school improvement and dropout prevention, this monograph interweaves two effective strategies--early childhood education and reading/writing programs--to provide information on early literacy development and how it can be nurtured. The monograph offers definitions and examples of early literacy development, focusing attention to the importance of positive attitudes and dispositions toward reading and writing. Practical suggestions are provided with respect to the physical environment, materials, routines, and schedules that promote literacy development. The monograph focuses on home-school connections and the assessment of early literacy problems. It also includes a list of appropriate books by age level and computer software and Web sites. (Contains 15 references.) (KB)

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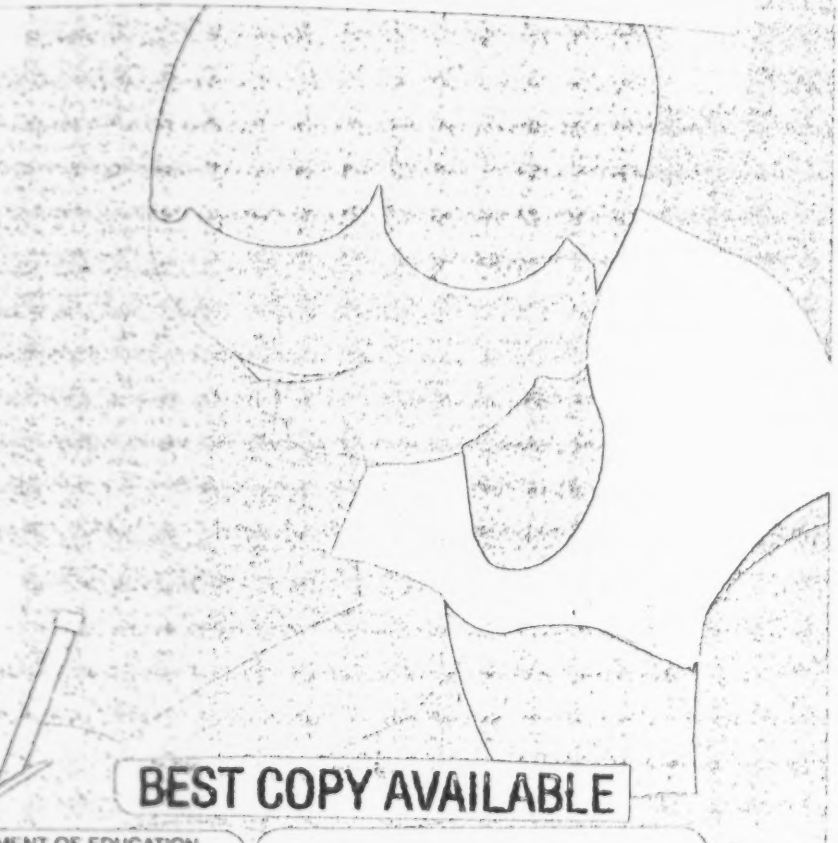
Effective Strategies for School Improvement

ED 472 188

Early Childhood Education

Early Literacy Education: First Steps Toward Dropout Prevention

by Dolores A. Stegelin



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Effective Strategies for School Improvement

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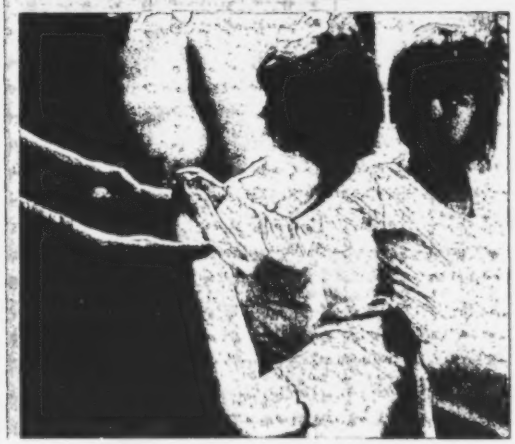

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Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center has conducted and analyzed research, sponsored extensive workshops, and collaborated with a variety of practitioners to further the mission of reducing America's dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations.

Students report a variety of reasons for dropping out of school; therefore, the solutions are multidimensional. The Center has identified 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the high school graduation rate. These strategies, although appearing to be independent, actually work well together and frequently overlap. They can be implemented as stand-alone programs (i.e., mentoring or family involvement projects), but when school districts develop a program improvement plan that encompasses most or all of these strategies, positive outcomes will result. These strategies have been successful in all school levels from pre-K-12 and in rural, suburban, or urban centers.

Family Involvement
Early Childhood Education
Reading/Writing Programs

Mentoring/Tutoring
Service-Learning
Alternative Schooling
Out-of-School Experiences

Professional Development
Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences
Instructional Technologies
Individualized Instruction

Systemic Renewal
Community Collaboration
Career Education/Workforce Readiness
Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution

A Message From the Series Editor

With the publication of this volume, the National Dropout Prevention Center begins offering short treatments of a variety of topics surrounding the Center's 15 Effective Strategies for School Improvement and Dropout Prevention. A listing of these strategies can be found opposite this page. These 15 strategies have been found to enhance student achievement, producing a better high school graduation rate. Also, these strategies are being successfully used at all levels of schooling from pre-K through the 12th grade, and in rural, suburban, and urban centers everywhere.

Each monograph in the series is intended to be a focused, authoritative work on a subject of current interest to educators and other readers. It is hoped that this series will prove valuable for individuals as well as groups seeking professional development. This series is intended to be used at the individual school level as well as the central office. Likewise, these readings are intended for both undergraduate teacher preparation classes and graduate students studying and analyzing research information.

Specifically, this volume interweaves two of the Center's effective strategies listed under the topic of Early Interventions. These two strategies are Early Childhood Education and Reading/Writing Programs. Developing literacy skills at the preschool level is a crucial foundation for continued success in school environments. This issue's author, as well as this editor, feel that the best time to intervene is as soon as possible. That, most assuredly, is the strength of this volume.

For a current list of available titles in this series, as well as other publications from the NDPC, please contact:

National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
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Clemson, SC 29631-1555
864-656-2599
www.dropoutprevention.org

—Robert C. Morris, Ph.D., Series Editor
Professor of Education
State University of West Georgia

Foreword

Early Literacy Education: First Steps Toward Dropout Prevention is explicitly about young children's literacy development. But, it is implicitly about helping young children be successful in school and the all-important relationship between early literacy development and school achievement.

Questions about when and how to teach beginning reading and writing are among the most controversial topics in early childhood education. This monograph provides practical and insightful answers to these questions and also provides information that helps us better understand early literacy development and how it can be nurtured. It is directed at parents, teachers, and decisionmakers who are committed to supporting and nurturing early literacy development. The bottom line is that children who are read to and who grow up in a literacy-rich environment grow up to be readers, writers, and successful learners.

This timely and well-organized volume offers definitions and examples of early literacy development. Attention is devoted to the importance of positive attitudes and dispositions toward reading and writing. Practical suggestions are provided with respect to the physical environment, materials, routines, and schedules that promote literacy development. Two topics of great importance are highlighted: home-school connections and assessing early literacy problems. The volume also provides resources including a listing of appropriate books by age level and computer software and web sites.

This is a timely and much-needed resource for early childhood educators who know the value of literacy and seek meaningful ways to nurture and support young children's literacy development. Clearly, teachers of young children will want to have this book on their library shelf. It is a fine contribution to our knowledge base and to practices that promote effective early literacy development.

—Linda B. Gambrell, Ph.D., Professor and Director
School of Education, Clemson University

Introduction

During the past two decades, dramatic changes in our understanding of early literacy development has occurred (Cullinan, 1992). We used to think that reading and writing skills developed in a stage sequence, culminating in a child being able to read and write at around five to six years of age. But we now know that early forms of language and literacy ability develop in an interrelated way from birth. Thus our understanding of how young children learn to read and write is much more sophisticated today than even 20 years ago. Because reading and writing skills develop from very early experiences that begin at birth, parents and teachers of young children play a critical role in determining whether or not the young child is ready for school and later academic success.

This publication is dedicated to explaining the phenomenon of early literacy development and the many variables that contribute to it. Our hope is that parents and teachers of young children and decisionmakers who impact the educational and care experiences of young children in the United States will find this booklet helpful in understanding the many forces that come together that result in a child being ready to negotiate the many demands of the public and private school setting.

Early childhood education is one of the 15 effective strategies identified by the National Dropout Prevention Center for school improvement and dropout prevention, and early literacy development is a pivotal part of overall success in early childhood education and development. Dispositions in young children that lead to their love of books and reading are believed to be critical factors in school retention and academic success. Couched within the context of school dropout prevention, the major goal is to demonstrate the critical need for **all** children to receive adequate environmental and human interaction and stimulation so that their early language and writing skills will develop and flourish.

—Dolores A. Stegelin, Ph.D.

Early Childhood Literacy: Definitions and Descriptions

Four-year-old Susan is riding with her mother to go to the mall on Saturday afternoon. The mall is a favorite place for both Susan and her mother, and many Saturday afternoons are spent walking, talking, shopping, and sharing. Today, as they approach the mall, Susan says, "Look Mommy, I can read those letters ...M...C...D...O...N...A...L...D...S. Can we please go there for lunch?" Susan's mother smiles and praises Susan, "That was great, Susan. I'm glad you can read the sign for McDonald's! Yes, we'll go there for a Happy Meal and something cold to drink."

This is an example of early literacy, and events like this occur every day across America. While we might think that Susan's comments are "cute," we also realize that her ability to read the signs of her favorite stores and places is a significant milestone. By reading the sign for McDonald's, Susan is demonstrating several early literacy skills:

- She recognizes what letters are and that they are important.
- Susan realizes that letters create words and that words create meaning.
- Susan knows that Mom is a "safe" person with whom to try out her ideas.
- Susan recognizes that McDonald's has social significance for her and her mother.
- Susan is beginning to build a vocabulary based on her recognition that letters and words are symbolic.
- Susan knows that she and her mother can have a special, shared experience at McDonald's. Being able to read signs in her culture eases her transition into it.

Definition of Early Literacy

Early childhood literacy refers to a child's efforts to understand both oral and written language, beginning at birth. This definition is derived from the most current research on early literacy development that provides evidence that early literacy skills, dispositions, and abilities begin at birth—much earlier than once thought. Children learn

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language through meaningful interactions with other people and the environment. Language acquisition is not a passive process; indeed, children "construct" their own language at their own pace and according to their individual life situations. Parents and teachers should have individualized expectations of young children in terms of language acquisition, based on each child's home environment, parent-child interactions, exposure to books and literacy experiences, unique personality and cognitive capacities, and their experiences with other children, older and younger.

One of the most recognized theories of language development is by Halliday (1975) who explains language development as a series of constructing meaning through interactions in the environment. He states that children's beginning language development is very practical; it is based on function. According to Halliday, language is learned when it is relevant and functional (1975, pp. 19-21). Halliday's seven functions of language are listed below:

Seven functions of a child's language use:

1. **Instrumental:** Use of language to satisfy a personal need and to get things done.	**Example:** "Potty, Mommy."
2. **Regulatory:** Use of language to control another's behavior.	**Example:** "No eat now."
3. **Interactional:** Use of language to socialize.	**Example:** "You want to play?"
4. **Personal:** Use of language to tell about themselves.	**Example:** "I'm sleepy now."
5. **Heuristic:** Use of language to learn about things.	**Example:** "What is doggy doing?"
6. **Imaginative:** Use of language to pretend or make believe.	**Example:** "Let's play house."
7. **Informative:** Use of language to inform others.	**Example:** "I'll tell you how to play cards."

(adapted from Morrow, 2001, p. 97)

Examples of Early Literacy

Whether you're a parent, a teacher, a professional in some other capacity, or any adult who is concerned about a young child's academic success and love for the school exeperience, you will recognize the following as examples of early childhood literacy:

- Baby Andy rocks his head as mother reads the same nursery rhyme to him each night.
- Baby Hannah squeals with delight when dad comes into the nursery holding a favorite children's book.
- Infant Caleb crawls across the room, picks up a sturdy children's book, and waves it at his mother who is sitting nearby.
- Toddler Terry quietly points at pictures in a storybook while mother reads it to him.
- Toddler Alex "chatters" and repeats words over and over as big brother reads to him a favorite, repetitive story.
- Very bright 3-year-old Cory reads a street sign while riding in the backseat of the family car on the way to Grandma's house.
- Preschooler Gracelyn "writes" her own grocery list while mom writes hers.
- Four-year-old Sam "measures" his stick horse, just like daddy measured the board he used to fix the front door.
- Prekindergartener Amy presents mom and dad with her first story that she wrote in class that crisp day in September, complete with random letters, invented spelling, and accompanying pictures.
- Kindergartener Thomas proudly shows mom and dad his journal that he writes in every day in kindergarten class; he shows them his tablet where he is practicing writing his full name.

What do all of these examples have in common? They demonstrate behaviors by young children in which there is recognition of oral or written language and communication.

Even simple body language such as rocking the head, pointing to letters and pictures in a storybook, and demonstrating delight through squeals, smiling, or robust laughing

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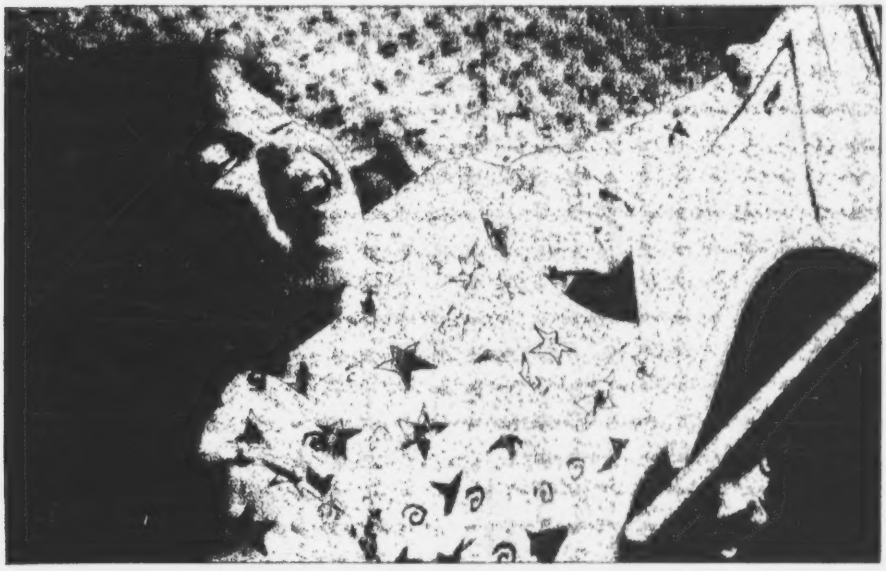
are examples of early literacy behaviors. All of these behaviors demonstrate that the child recognizes a love for print, anticipates a shared experience with a parent or sibling, or understands that print is symbolic and meaningful. Thus, early childhood literacy behaviors are varied and can be very visible or very subtle. Parents and teachers should be on the lookout for these behaviors because they signal that the child is hearing, thinking, and understanding the world more completely because of oral and written language.



Developing Positive Attitudes and Dispositions

Early literacy development reflects more than "being able to read." Indeed, it also includes attitudes toward the reading experience, a love for books and storytelling, and all of the shared emotional experiences with parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, and other significant persons who go along with the excitement and love of learning. All of the above examples are positive indicators in that they suggest that young children are developing positive attitudes and a disposition for reading and writing. These attitudes and behaviors all contribute to the greater likelihood that these children will not drop out of school and, in fact, will be successful in the school experience.

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Rationale and Research Basis for Early Literacy Experiences

According to Morrow (2001), literacy begins in infancy. Recent research on how children learn to read and write has provided us with new evidence that is changing the way we view early literacy development. While we expect elementary teachers to focus on reading and writing skills in their classrooms, the fact is that parents, child-care teachers and directors, and preschool and kindergarten teachers all have a tremendous impact on the young child's ability to read and to achieve academic success. **What happens to the very young child during the first five formative years determines to a great extent how that child will enter the school setting.**

Among the current recommendations and statements of rationale for focusing on early literacy development are these:

- The basis for reading and writing really begins during infancy and toddlerhood, not in kindergarten, as we once believed. Simply put, what happens to babies influences later school success.
- Parents need to provide a home environment that is literacy-rich and they need to be actively involved in their child's literacy learning when they enter school (Morrow, 2001).
- Each young child will have varying early literacy experiences, depending on the home environment, parents' education level, parents' degree of involvement and modeling of reading behaviors, child-care experiences, and individual child cognitive and language capacity.
- Early literacy experiences that create positive attitudes and a disposition to read will lead to more successful readers.
- Learning environments, both at home and in child-care and preschool settings, should include many different books and resource materials that encourage language exploration, and they should be age-appropriate and readily accessible. Children should be immersed in quality children's books and materials.

- Both at home and in the child-care and preschool setting, parents and teachers should focus on language-based experiences that include listening, reading, writing, spelling, and viewing (Morrow, 2001).
- Individual differences in children's ability to read and process information must be recognized, and cultural and linguistic differences should be supported through individual child/adult interactions and appropriate books and learning materials.

Researchers investigating early childhood literacy development have brought about changes in theory and practice (Morrow, 2001). Over the past 20 years, the theory about early literacy development has led to change in practice. The current research advocates for what is known as a "balanced approach" to literacy instruction. The next section provides an overview of recent research findings about early literacy development.

Research Findings on Early Literacy Development

Two national organizations have been instrumental in setting the new direction for early literacy instruction: The International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Together, they have developed a position statement on early literacy. What is advocated by these two organizations is a balanced approach to literacy instruction that includes both explicit instruction and whole language strategies. What is "explicit instruction" and what is "whole language"?

Explicit instruction or "directed instruction" refers to strategies that include phonemic awareness, phonics, and the "mechanics" of language such as the sounds that make up words. In the 1950s, this approach was more common, and children learned to read by first learning to sound out words and through reinforcement for sight reading (memorizing whole words). Researchers who have contributed to the explicit instruction theory include Juel (1989); Adams (1990); Morrow & Tracey (1997); and many others.

Whole language, on the other hand, refers to more open-ended, naturalistic, and contextual approaches to teaching

pre-reading skills. Many different research studies have been completed on the whole language approach, which is defined as "...both a philosophy of language development as well as the instructional approaches embedded within....this concept includes the use of real literature and writing in the context of meaningful, functional, and cooperative experiences in order to develop in students motivation and interest in the process of learning (Morrow, 2001, p. 14)."

The current research advocates for a blending or merging of the above two approaches: explicit instruction and whole language. Simply put, young children need to be provided with adult modeling of the correct sounds for words and language, given positive reinforcement for their efforts, and also immersed in high quality books and literature that have context and meaning. The balanced approach is believed to hold the greatest promise for producing young readers who not only know how to sound out words but also have a love and passion for the process of reading.

Implications of Research for Teachers and Parents

The current research findings on early childhood literacy development have implications for both teachers and parents. From the teacher perspective, it is important that any teacher of young children (child care, preschool, K-4, kindergarten) understand that young children learn best through a balanced approach. This means that the child-care teacher has a responsibility to set up a learning environment that will encourage the young child to explore books, to be read to, to write and scribble, and to develop a love and positive disposition for language, both written and oral. With so many American infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in all-day child-care settings, this research has significant implications. There is a need to train child-care teachers about the importance of early literacy and the potential role of quality child care in supporting early literacy development. Children spend countless hours in child-care settings that may not be cognitively stimulating or that may not have adequate books and learning materials. Schedules in child-care settings may not adequately include time to spend reading to and with young children or in developing a positive attitude and love for the reading experience.

Early Literacy in the Classroom

Millions of young children in the U.S. attend or participate in some form of early childhood education in the formative first five years. Teachers, whether they are in child care, Head Start, or school settings, have tremendous influence on the children in their care. In this section we focus on two major areas: (1) teacher-child interaction and instructional strategies that promote early literacy development and (2) creating literacy-rich environments that facilitate and optimize early language and literacy development of children birth to age eight.

Instructional Strategies That Facilitate Early Literacy Development

Skilled early childhood teachers are always seeking effective strategies that encourage literacy development. According to Vukelich, Christie, and Enz (2002), knowledgeable early childhood teachers do the following to facilitate early literacy development:

- They create a print-rich classroom environment.
- They demonstrate and model literacy events.
- They provide opportunities for children to work and play together in literacy-rich environments.
- They link literacy and play and create play settings that integrate reading and writing.
- They encourage children to experiment with beginning forms of reading and writing.
- They use language and literacy for real purposes and audiences.
- They encourage children to read familiar books on their own.
- They use authentic forms of assessment to find out what children know and can do.
- They respect and make accommodations for individual children's cultural, developmental, and linguistic needs.

(Vukelich, Christie & Enz, 2002, iii)

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Early childhood teachers who are effective at building early literacy skills with the children in their classrooms do many things in common. Teacher-child interactions–instructional and informal–are critical avenues to building reading and writing skills in young children. Following are examples of specific teacher behaviors that will facilitate and maximize early literacy development:

- **Functional Literacy Activities.** This is a broad-based strategy that provides opportunities for children who are at different stages of literacy development to learn new skills and concepts. Examples of functional literacy activities include the following:
  - Structuring the play setting to encourage child independence and problem solving, such as making necklaces for children to wear in learning centers. These necklaces not only facilitate classroom management; they teach children about number, one-to-one correspondence, and color; and they may have useful labels that inform children about the activity they are going to enter.
  - Using play as a context for literacy development. For example, three children decide to go into the dramatic play center to pretend it is a McDonald's. The teacher picks up on the children's obvious interest in this play setting and she devises ways to incorporate oral and written language into this play setting. She might set up a cash register complete with paper, menus, a microphone for waiters and waitresses to repeat customer orders, small tables and chairs to encourage conversations among the children, and so on. The early literacy opportunities with this setting are limitless. The truly perceptive early childhood teacher will seize upon this play setting to extend and enrich literacy development.
- **Teacher Involvement in Play.** In this particular teaching strategy, the teacher can play a pivotal role in modeling and demonstrating oral and written language. The teacher can assume a passive, uninvolved role in children's play, or she can interject herself at varying degrees of involvement, with varying goals for literacy development. The teacher can scaffold the play setting by:
  - asking questions of the children as they play in order to expand their thinking and encourage verbal expression;

- engaging in informal conversation with the children;
- narrating the children's play activities;
- suggesting new directions for the play activity;
- problem solving with the children in a play situation ("How can we figure out who should be the store manager, since both Mark and Madelyn want to be the manager?"); and
- actually taking a directive role and dictating to the children what and how the play should go next.

Which strategy a teacher decides to take will depend on the (1) age of children; (2) purpose of the play activity; (3) teacher goals relevant to this particular group of children; and (4) ethnic, cultural, and developmental diversity of the group of children at play.

- **Models positive attitudes and literacy behaviors.** All of us can recall our favorite (and not so favorite) teachers, and many of our favorite teachers were very effective role models. They instilled within us a love of learning, an eagerness to get up in the morning and go to school, and a love of reading and writing. Effective early childhood teachers show enthusiasm for reading, read a book themselves during quiet times in the classroom, tell favorite stories, show excitement and delight in a child's discoveries within a storybook, and convince the children in their classroom that nothing is more important than school!
- **Shares books with children on a regular basis as part of the daily schedule.** Each day, children look forward to that special time when Ms. Smith pulls out a big book, a chapter book, or any age-appropriate book to share with the class. The effective early childhood teacher knows that predictability and consistency are important; children can "count on" that special time each day; and it provides the teacher with many opportunities to read, dialogue, converse, question, problem solve, and, in myriad other ways, interact orally with the children.
- **Engages children in language games that encourage creativity, individual expression, and feelings of security.** The creative early childhood teacher will use many forms of games with the birth to age eight groups of children. Games are fun, and they allow children to express themselves freely. Informally, children provide

one another with powerful role models; thus children who are shyer, from a different cultural or linguistic background, or who may have a language delay are provided with "safe" language models.

- **Encourages children to experiment with writing.** Once again, the teacher looks for writing opportunities and integrates writing with play. She/he models writing by engaging directly in the writing process, encouraging children to write (at whatever level they are), is noncritical of beginning writing efforts, and encourages parents to support writing activities at home. Examples include (1) setting up writing centers in science, dramatic play, and other learning centers; (2) partnering with another group of children for a "pen pal" experience; (3) maintaining journals in the classroom for each child to contribute to on a regular basis; (4) using technology to extend writing experiences, such as emails with parents, use of the computer and age-appropriate software, and message centers and mailbox exchange sites for the children within the classroom.
- **Encourages and models effective metacognitive behaviors.** The effective teacher will encourage children "to think out loud," to talk about what they think about a story, and to problem solve within the group setting. The teacher also models effective metacognitive skills, such as "I got up this morning, and one of the tires on my car was flat. I was running late and didn't know what to do."
- **Incorporates music and movement into all areas of curriculum so as to enhance oral language, storytelling, and music literacy.** The truly memorable and effective early childhood teacher is creative! He finds ways to learn math concepts to music and dance; encourages children to use musical instruments and to learn the literacy of music; provides storytelling opportunities (both formally and informally) that provide wondrous verbal and visual images for children; and isn't afraid to sing and integrate the world of music into the traditional curricular areas of math, science, social studies, and language arts.

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Creating Literacy-Rich Environments

Early childhood settings should be cognitively stimulating, and they should encourage children to explore the meaning of print and words. Regardless of the setting—child care, preschool, kindergarten, or primary classroom—there are important components of a literacy-rich environment. The early childhood educator needs to know how to construct an environment that excites children about learning, encourages them to interact with books, and instills a love for the reading process.

The joint position on early literacy development prepared by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association (IRA) emphasizes the importance of developmentally-appropriate materials and instructional practices for teachers of young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). Instruction should be challenging but achievable. In other words, teachers must assess each child's current level of literacy understanding and then provide stimulating learning experiences that will move the child to the next level of understanding. These literacy-rich environments should take into consideration the wide range of abilities that exist among all young children, and the materials and environment should "invite" each child to interact and engage at his/her own particular pace and level of understanding.

When we talk about the literacy-rich environment, we are referring to room arrangement, materials that are available for both children and teachers, scheduling of events throughout the day, parent-child interaction opportunities, culturally responsive and sensitive curriculum, ongoing assessment through observation of children, a wide variety of instruction, and high-quality literacy materials (McGee & Richgels, 2000).

The Literacy-Rich Physical Environment

The physical design and classroom arrangement may be the most concrete factors that impact early literacy development. How materials are arranged affects the choices that children make among learning activities (Morrow & Tracey, 1997). Early childhood programs that nurture early literacy development require a literacy-rich environment, an interdisciplinary approach to the development of literacy, and recognition of individual differences and levels of development (Morrow, 2001, p. 321). Generally speaking, all high quality early childhood education (ECE) programs place a high value on the physical environment and this can be traced to earlier models or approaches, such as Montessori.

Key factors in the literacy-rich physical environment include the following:

- **Creating activity or learning centers** that actively include oral and written language experiences and opportunities. Most ECE classrooms have four to seven different learning centers that encourage dramatic play, fine motor development, literacy (reading and writing) activities, large motor and movement, science and math, music, art, computers and technology, and others as appropriate for the age and philosophy of the program. According to Vukelich, Christie, and Enz (2002), the early childhood classroom should be "carved" into meaningful and smaller learning areas.

  Centers that are related or alike should be placed next to each other. For example, nap space should go next to another quiet space, such as the library center, while dramatic play might go beside large motor and movement areas.

- **Using environmental print throughout the classroom.** Examples of environmental print include labels on tubs, signs that hang from the ceiling labeling each learning center, message boards and centers with children's names on mailboxes, children's names on cubbies and private spaces, rules of the classroom clearly posted, directions and guidelines for fire and tornado drills, word walls that display high-frequency words learned, experience charts and morning messages, parent wall and notice board, and so forth.
- **Creating outdoor play environments that encourage language expression.** For example, placing crates, large durable blocks, boxes, boards, plastic containers of various sizes, and other such materials will encourage small group play that is creative, verbal, and that encourages conversation and problem solving. Outdoor areas and equipment can also be labeled, and storage units can identify where specific materials (buckets, shovels, rakes, etc.) are to be placed.
- **Making a literacy center that is a focus of attention in the classroom.** The literacy center should be highly accessible and materials should be within reach for whatever age of children using the center. This center should include two major activities: (1) reading and relating to books and stories and (2) writing of all types. This area should accommodate four to five children at one time (Morrow, 2001) and can include small rocking chairs, rugs, stuffed animals, stuffed pillows, and other spaces that invite children to spend quiet and private time with books. Books, children's magazines, games, and literacy-related activities should all be stored neatly on shelves or in containers that are clearly labeled. Soft elements in the literacy center send a message to children: "This is a special and quiet place where you can explore, imagine, read, write, and discover the meaning of print." Colorful posters and pictures can also be hung in this center.
- **Designing a writing area or center.** Writing areas can actually be placed in several learning centers in the classrooms, and they can be very simple spaces that include a small table and two to three child-sized chairs. Also available in the writing areas should be writing tools (such as markers, pencils, pens, crayons, and chalk) and assorted kinds and textures of paper.

- **Displaying children's work in special areas.** Children's literacy-related work should be stored and displayed. These displays can include portfolios, individual child folders, bulletin boards, clotheslines for hanging drawings and paintings, and wall space. Photo albums can be used to document the children's individual and group literacy work, and these albums can be purchased or donated by parents.
- **Using art, posters, and other visual arts to make the classroom aesthetically pleasant and inviting.** Young children are drawn to visually attractive settings (as we all are!), and the ECE teacher can create inviting and pleasant surroundings within the entire classroom and within each learning or activity center. Hanging NAEYC posters that depict children at play, engaged with books, interacting with adults, and other typical child behaviors help young children relate to their learning environments. Hanging real art in the classroom, along with the children's work, sends an important message to young children: Your drawing and artwork is just as important as Picasso's!
- **Making a Parent Wall or Parent Space encourages parent involvement and communication.** These special spaces say to parents "You're important and we want to hear from you." A Parent Wall can include a small area in the foyer or in the classroom for parents to post messages, family photos, notices of meetings, a suggestion box, or other forms of communication. Inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach of Northern Italy, these Parent Walls are being used more and more in the United States. Parent Walls can be managed by the teacher, by a parent volunteer, or by a parent committee.

Examples of Room Arrangements

The actual arrangement of early childhood classrooms can take on varied forms, depending on the age of the children, the available space, and the philosophy of the program. Figures 1 and 2 show appropriate room arrangements for both the preschool through kindergarten age group and the primary age groups.

Figure 1.

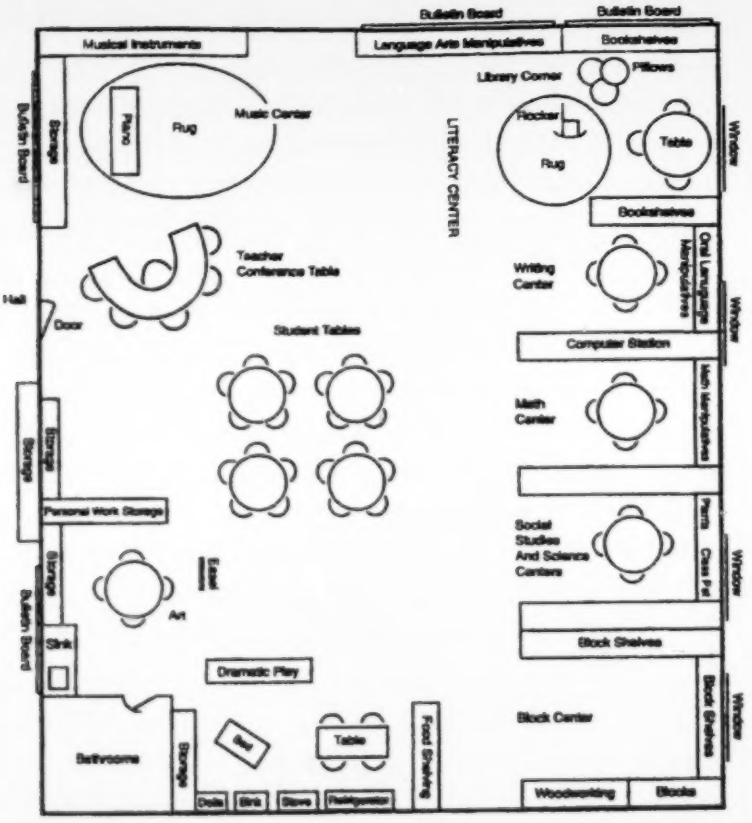
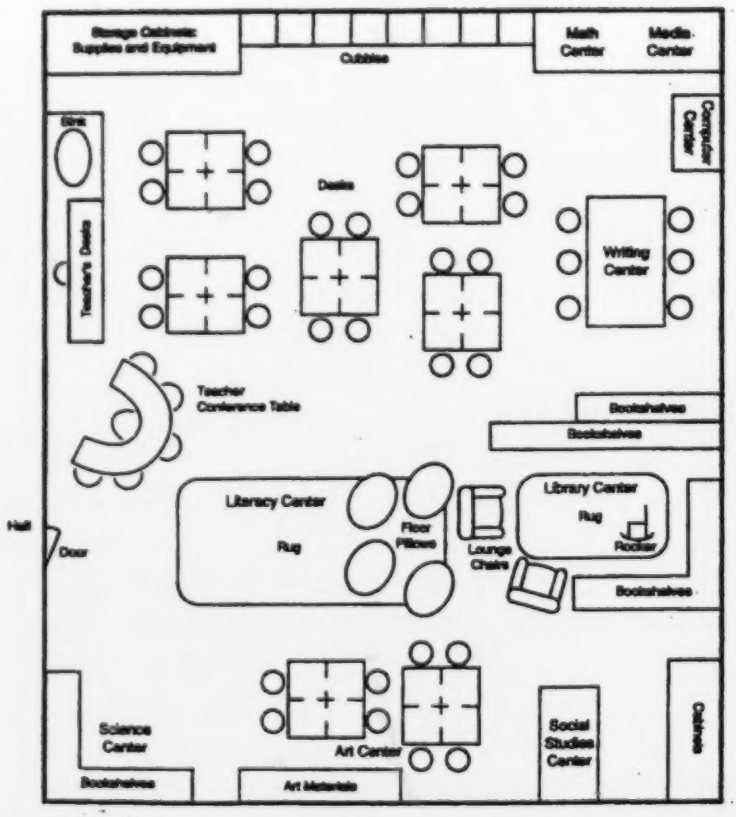


Figure 2



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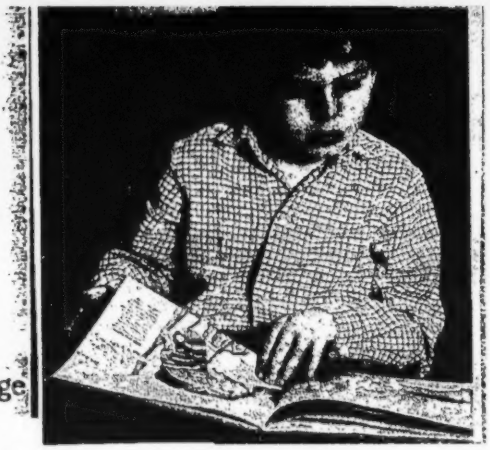
Literacy-Rich Materials

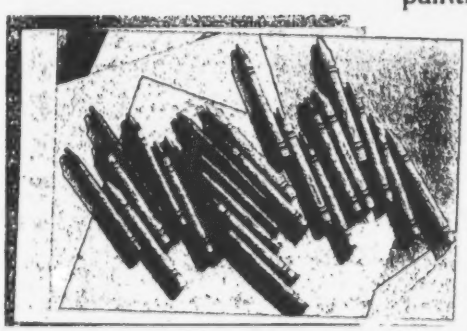


Materials that should be included in the literacy-rich classroom include the following:

- High-quality children's literature that includes Caldecott award winning books, traditional and classical readings, trade books, multicultural storybooks, reference materials, and children's magazines
- Materials geared to parents that inform and engage parents in their children's learning
- Big books, chapter books, and specialized children's books
- Variety of genres—traditional literature, fantasy, fiction, historical fiction, biography, autobiography, and poetry
- Fables and folktales that create an intergenerational literature continuum
- Wordless picture books that portray a story through illustrations
- Predictable books that encourage children to learn the rhythm of reading and to enhance their word-recognition abilities
- Alphabet books of varying levels of difficulty
- Audiovisual materials (videos, audiotapes, films and filmstrips, software) and access to computer-based literacy programs
- Dictionaries that rely on illustrations to define and explain
- Writing materials in centers throughout the classroom
- Computer centers that allow for a small group of children to interact with computer-based literacy activities
- Writing tools such as pencils and pens with interesting shapes; fancy toppers such as feathers or objects; markers such as highlighters, fragrant markers, or markers that change colors; alphabet stamps; tiles; cookie cutters; magnetic letters; felt letters; crayons; indoor and outdoor chalk
- Storytelling props that encourage children to act out stories, engage in small group literacy activities, and experiment with oral langugage
- Art materials and other avenues for children to respond to the stories that they read or hear. Children can illustrate their own stories and create their own books in these centers.

Routines and Schedules That Promote Literacy Development

Having a rich supply of materials is very important, but just as important are the daily routines that the teacher, parents, and other supportive adults put into place that will encourage literacy development. There is considerable evidence that daily reading and writing experiences are crucial for children's literacy development. For example, research reflects that children who engage in daily sustained or silent reading for an hour a day have larger vocabularies than those children who do not engage in a quiet and individual way with books and literature. Research also indicates that children whose teachers read aloud or tell stories to them on a daily basis are more highly motivated readers with extensive vocabularies and effective comprehensive strategies (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). For example, teachers in literacy-rich classrooms read aloud or tell stories daily and they set aside times for children to read and write independently (McGee & Richgels, 2000). Throughout the day, children have frequent encounters with print, oral language, and creative avenues of expression. Creative early childhood teachers will invent ways to engage children in both oral and written language, and that includes small and large group book sharing, storytelling, retelling of stories, acting out or drama related to stories, writing, children's dictating to the teachers related to a story or other language experience, conversations among children, painting and illustrating, and other creative activities.



Examples of Literacy Routines in ECE Classrooms

In ***child-care classrooms,*** the following routines can be included to encourage literacy development:

- Morning reading of a story or big book with a follow-up activity
- Before-nap sharing of a nursery rhyme
- Listening to soft music and chants before and after naptime
- Inviting a parent to come and read in the book center every Tuesday and Friday afternoon

- Having the library mobile bus come to the center the first and third Mondays of each month

In ***kindergarten and primary classrooms,*** the following routines can be included to encourage literacy development:

- Daily sustained and quiet book reading
- Daily writing in individual child's journals
- Viewing a video twice a month and then doing a follow-up activity
- Inviting a community member to come into the classroom each month to read a book with the children (can include the mayor, the school superintendent, the principal, a doctor, dentist, fireman, policeman, and other community representatives)
- Adding a literacy item each week to an individual Literacy Portfolio
- Doing an art activity each Friday afternoon that relates to a literacy activity of that week.
- Weekly response to literature activities that encourage children's emotional and intellectual engagement related to a story (puppet show; dramatic play, etc).

Common Literacy Routines for the ECE Classroom

- Reading aloud on a daily basis, often with the use of storytelling props such as finger puppets, large puppets, flannel board props, dioramas, object props from the story line, clothing items, masks, and other items.
- Telling stories with the children taking turns adding to the story to encourage creative expression and self-confidence in oral expression.
- Children dictating a story as the teacher records on a variety of writing backgrounds.
- Viewing of films, filmstrips, or videotapes about quality literature and then doing a follow-through activity.
- Regular displaying of children's drawing and interpretations of a story (such as the use of clothesline props).

- Independent or "silent" reading and writing on a daily basis with children "journaling" in individual journals.
- Sharing response-to-literature activities (opportunities for children to engage emotionally and intellectually with literature: laughing, writing, drawing, retelling, singing, cooking, drama, and painting).
- Parent involvement on a regular basis such as having a parent come to class and share a story and related activity on a weekly basis (such as every Friday afternoon).
- Guest speakers and community members come on a monthly basis to share their culture, language, or lifestyle.

Sample Daily Schedules

Depending on the age of the children, daily schedules may be half-day, whole-day, or extended-day. How a schedule is developed depends on student age, session length (full- or half-day), program goals, parental desires, and transportation avenues. Here are some examples of daily schedules that reflect balance in terms of active and quiet times and that provide opportunities for literacy development and play:

Toddler Child Care–Half-Day

7:30	Arrival and free play
8:00-8:30	Breakfast and clean up
8:30-9:00	Toileting
9:00-10:00	Free choice play and activity time
10:00-10:15	Clean-up time
10:15-10:35	Morning snack
10:35-10:50	Book time (individual lap reading)
10:50-11:15	Outdoor play
11:15-11:30	Clean up
11:30-12:00	Quiet play and storybook sharing
12:00	Dismissal

Preschool Class Schedule–Morning

9:00-10:30	Arrival, free choice activity time
10:30-10:45	Snack time, toileting, cleanup
10:45-11:00	Gathering time and book sharing
11:00-11:15	Storybook follow-up activity (puppets, retelling, drawing, etc)
11:15-11:45	Outdoor play
11:45-12:00	Clean up and dismissal

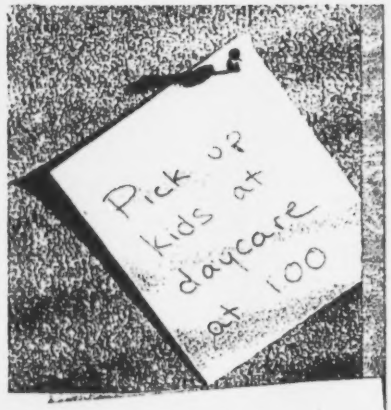
Kindergarten Schedule—Half-day

9:00-9:20	Circle time
9:20-10:20	Activity or Free Choice Play Time
10:20-10:30	Toileting and cleanup
10:30-10:45	Snack and quiet reading
10:45-11:00	Group time
11:00-11:30	Outdoor play
11:30-11:50	Literature Time
11:50	Dismissal

Kindergarten Schedule—Full-day

*Larger blocks of time are available with this schedule.

8:30-9:00	Arrival, morning routines (hanging up coats, etc.), quiet activities
9:00-9:30	Whole-group meeting, songs and exercises, discussion of topic for the day, daily news, planning for the day.
9:30—9:50	Whole-class activity, such as language arts, storytelling, book sharing, or math activity that varies each day and has a follow-up assignment the next period.
9:50-10:15	Small-group teacher-guided activity, center activities, literacy activities.
10:15-10:45	Free play, indoors or outdoors, including dramatic play, blocks, and woodworking. Cooking or art projects can be done at this time each week or at a special time.
10:45-11:00	Clean up and morning snack.
11:00-11:30	Shared storybook reading, dramatic play or role-playing, shared book reading, etc.
11:30-12:15	Literacy center time to explore and manipulate items such as puppets, writing area, listening to tapes, CDs, etc.
12:15-1:15	Lunch and outdoor play. If inclement weather, large motor activities in the room or other area in the building.
1:15-1:45	Rest period.
1:45-2:10	Center time with all available centers open and a special project in one area. Work in small groups or independently.
2:10-2:35	Outdoor play, large-motor play in gym, or large motor movement activities.
2:35-2:50	Work-group circle time. Summary of day's activities, plan for the next day, sharing of work created by the children.
2:50-3:00	Preparation for dismissal. Dismissal.



Note: Full-day schedule for younger children will include more quiet and rest times as well as fewer teacher-directed or structured activities.

Home-School Literacy Connection: Involving Parents

Early childhood teachers who spend a great deal of time and energy developing and supporting reading and writing skills in their ECE classrooms with young children are eager for those literacy skills and connections to continue in the home setting. ***Parents are the child's first teachers, and involving parents and other family members in literacy development simply reinforces classroom activities.*** Family literacy means many things, and one of the most significant predictors of later academic success is systematically being read to by an adult. However, family literacy is a broad term and consists of many possibilities that include the following:

- Children being read to on a regular basis (nighttime stories)
- Parents modeling reading and writing skills (reading the newspaper)
- Parents and other relatives (aunts, uncles, grandparents) telling stories to children
- Having newspapers, magazines, books, and other sources of literacy visibly available in the home environment
- Keeping family journals, chronicles, diaries, and biographies
- Using literacy to "get things done" in the home (Morrow, 2001), such as making grocery lists or "to do" lists and having children use them, too
- Using message boards, markers, and other "message" ideas to communicate within the family
- Documenting family history, vacations, and a sense of family identity and cultural awareness through photography and videotaping

How Teachers Can Involve Parents

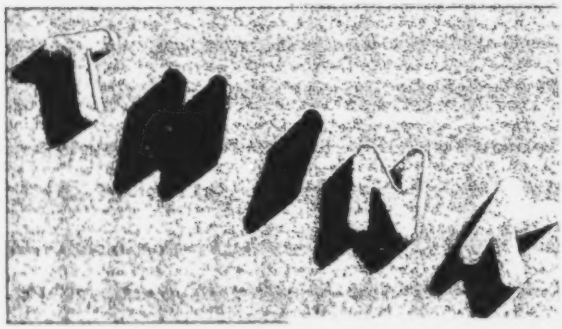
Teachers can support early literacy development in two primary ways: (1) by engaging parents directly in the classroom activities and (2) by developing an effective school-home program that focuses on literacy. There are a variety of ways to involve parents in the ECE classroom:

- Scheduling a parent to come into the classroom and read in small or large group child settings on a weekly basis. Parents can sign up at the beginning of the school year (or, in the case of child-care centers, on an ongoing basis) and the early childhood teacher should take the initiative in telephoning or personally contacting parents to encourage their involvement and remind them of their scheduled times.
- Inviting parents of varying ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to share a story or family tradition from the country of origin. Bringing food, clothing items, or other items that reflect the culture should be encouraged. Storytelling or other oral language activities from the country of origin can be integrated, with the children being invited to join in songs, chants, or movement.
- Developing "family literacy portfolios" in the classroom that involve parents and children working together to collect photos, memorabilia, family letters, and other items of significance to the family to mount and display in their own personal portfolios. Teachers can schedule "family work times" on a regular basis and provide snacks for families. This type of literacy activity not only encourages oral and written language activity among family members, but it strengthens the home-school connection, communication between teacher and parents, and communication among the parents.
- Teachers can maintain reading and writing folders or portfolios on each child in the classroom and then invite parents in on a regular basis for conferences. When children reach formal schooling, parents should be kept informed on a regular basis about the child's reading and writing progress.
- Parents can be invited to co-chair special events, such as dramas and plays, and to assist with costume making, rehearsing, advertising, and successfully putting on events that encourage oral language and other literacy skills.

- Parents can be invited to be in charge of a Parent Wall in the classroom that provides space for parents to communicate with one another, advertise items for sale, show off favorite family photos, or other means of self-expression.
- Parents can be invited to help write and distribute newsletters about the ECE classroom activities, special events, or even to set up an e-mail distribution process for communication among parents and teachers.

In terms of encouraging parents to engage in literacy activities at home with their children, early childhood teachers can do a multitude of things. For example:

1) The teacher can establish a book check-out area for parents to be able to check out a book and accompanying item (puppet, story prop) to use at home. A short journal can be attached that asks each parent to write about this literacy experience with their child. ECE teachers can use creative ideas such as book bags that include the book, writing supplies, and suggestions for parent-child activities centered on the book in the bag.
2) Stories read in the classroom can be extended to the home setting. After reading *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, for example, the teacher can send home a legal-sized sheet of paper with a line dividing the sheet into two halves. On one side of the paper, the parent can respond to "When I was young....," and on the other side of the sheet, the child can respond to "When I was young...." Parents and children can share their responses, send the completed assignment back to the classroom, and the teacher can assemble a class Parent-Child Book entitled "When I Was Young." Photos can be included, and the book can be placed where all parents and children can read and enjoy.
3) ECE teachers in child-care and school settings can hold special parent nights or workshops at the center or school with the specific focus being "Choosing and Reading Books to Young Children," "Setting Up a Library at Home," "Involving Children in Writing at Home," "How to Use the Local Library," and other literacy related themes or topics. Guest speakers can include the local librarian, a children's author, a storyteller, or someone else in the community who has a literacy message to share. The teacher can have examples of appropriate children's books by age,



where to obtain them, and she can model how to read to an infant, toddler, preschooler, and primary age child. They can discuss ways to establish more systematic literacy routines at home, encouraging the parents to assist in generating a list of possible routines. Teachers can reward parents by having a raffle or drawing and giving out one or two children's books to parents who participate and win.

4) ECE teachers can schedule home visits for the purpose of bringing a children's book to share with the family and then discussing and documenting the visit and conversation about how this family already includes literacy at home and what goals they may want to develop for that year. This home visit strengthens the rapport and communication between teacher and family, while emphasizing the importance of early literacy activities in the home.

5) ECE teachers can ask parents to donate videos for the purpose of setting up a "Family Video Checkout Center" in the classroom. By sharing their videos, parents have more inexpensive but appropriate ways to have a family literacy activity. The ECE teacher must use discretion when setting up this center, making sure that videos are family-focused and appropriate. The teacher can develop follow-up activities for parents and children to do together after viewing the video, or she can send home a "Video Journal" for each family to record their response to the specific video.

6) The ECE teacher can use a "Writing Briefcase" which is usually an inexpensive plastic carrying case, backpack, or canvas portfolio. Inside the briefcase, the teacher can provide paper, pencils, markers, glue, tape-anything that might stimulate a child to write a story, make a greeting card, design a book cover, or create an item of interest (Vukelich et al., 2002, p. 239). The teacher can keep seven or eight briefcases available, with four or five being available for daily checkout while the teacher refurbishes the others. The briefcases can be numbered, and a checkout system can be developed that is similar to the book checkout process described above.

Assessing Early Literacy Problems

Both parents and ECE teachers can be the gatekeepers to identifying children who have potential reading and/or writing difficulties or the potential for later-school difficulty. ECE teachers can provide a valuable service to parents of young children by holding workshops that focus on assessment and observation of young children for the specific purpose of identifying potential problems in reading and writing.

The ECE Teacher's Role in Assessment

Whether a teacher is in a child-care, preschool, or school setting, there are many different ways for the teacher to observe, record, and identify behaviors that may indicate potential problems in literacy development. Some simple tools that teachers can use include the following:

- **Anecdotal records and anecdotal journal that records behaviors of each child in the classroom.** These behaviors can focus on the child's literacy-related skills, including ability to hear, comprehend, follow directions, recognize letters, and make comparisons, as well as vocabulary and word use, sentence structure, and the child's attention span. Anecdotal records can be very informal, such as using sticky notes to paste within each child's anecdotal journal section. Most teachers must do anecdotal records "on the run," so they must develop observational strategies that work for them and their particular ECE setting.
- **Portfolios on literacy skills such as reading, writing, or language development.** The teacher can place key items in the portfolio that reflect the level of development and the progress (or lack of progress) being made by the child. Portfolio assessment should be systematic. In other words, teachers need to establish a routine or schedule for placing items in the portfolio (for example, every Friday afternoon).

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- **Alphabet-recognition tasks.** The teacher can purchase or prepare a simple upper- and lower-case recognition task by typing or printing in random order all of the letters of the alphabet and then have the children, one-by-one, recognize and state each one.
- **Concepts-About-Print Task.** In this assessment process, the teacher seeks to learn if the child has an understanding of basic "book facts." Does the child know where the front and back of the book are? Do they know the top and bottom of a page? Do they understand how to hold a book? Do they understand that print is read from left to right and from top to bottom? Big books are often good to use for this assessment process, because they are easy for children to hold and see.
- **Phonemic Awareness Assessment Task.** The ECE teacher can better understand to what degree a child understands letter sounds by using picture cards of words that begin with the same letter, rhymes that use the same sound, and so forth. Using books such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* will allow the teacher to observe the child's beginning awareness of phonemes.
- **Retellings.** Retellings are tasks in which children read and then retell a text (McGee & Richgels, 2002, p. 356; Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985). To retell, children recall everything they can remember from the story or informational text either orally or in writing. This assesses memory and competence in spoken language.

Involving Parents in Literacy Assessment

Parents should be expected to provide helpful information to the teacher regarding the assessment of the young child for potential problems in literacy development and skills. ECE teachers can provide take-home checklists for parents to use that ask the parent to observe and record important information about their child. This checklist can be made by the teacher, completed at strategic times of the year, and can include such items as:

(1) recording child's favorite words;

(2) five examples of sentences used by the child;

(3) child's favorite books;

(4) measures of approximate attention span;

(5) providing audiotapes and/or videotapes of their child relating to books, in conversation, or retelling a favorite family story; and

(6) open-ended comments by the parent regarding their child's language development, ability to have conversations with others, and concerns about their child's development.

Formal Assessment Options

Young children sometimes have language-related developmental delays and it is quite important to identify these children as soon as possible. ECE teachers and parents can rely on school-based, medical personnel and community resources for formal assessment procedures. With new federal laws in place, children beginning at the age of three years are entitled to school-supported evaluations related to hearing, speech, and general language development. Children younger than three years of age are most frequently in child-care settings, and community resources are available for those types of assessments. ECE teachers should work in collaboration with parents to identify community resources for assistance in determining whether or not a child really does have a language delay. Pediatricians, the local health department, social services agencies, Easter Seal Society, and other agencies are examples of community resources. If the child is three years of age, then the child's respective school district should be used for assessment purposes. The school administrator, special education coordinator, school nurse, or school counselor are all appropriate contacts for the parents or a preschool teacher for referral purposes.

Conclusion

School readiness and dropout prevention are topics of great interest at both the national and state levels. This publication addresses the critical role of early literacy development as a tool to address school readiness and dropout prevention. Defined broadly as all experiences that relate to oral and written language, early literacy development is essential if young children are to enter school ready to learn. Early childhood teachers in child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, and kindergarten classrooms in the United States all play an important role in early literacy development. Children who learn to love books and the reading process while infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are the same young students who succeed in the school setting. Therefore, training early childhood teachers in early literacy development in the myriad of child settings is essential. Child-care teachers who know how to arrange stimulating play environments, model oral and written language skills, engage young children in storytelling and dramatization, and involve children's parents in the process of literacy development, are going to be successful in their goal of educating and caring for our nation's young children.

Early Literacy Resources for Young Children

Young children from birth to eight years of age have a wealth of literacy materials and experiences awaiting them. It is the responsibility of parents, ECE teachers, community volunteers, and responsible care-giving adults to provide these young children with high-quality, predictable, and consistent early literacy experiences. Following is a discussion of developmentally-appropriate books for young children that include classics as well as more recent publications. These books are grouped by categories for infants/toddlers and for preschool children. Also included are computer-based literacy resources, assessment resources for parents to use, and parent and family literacy resources.

Books for Infants and Toddlers

Cardboard, Cloth, and Plastic Books for Babies (adapted from Morrow, 2001).

Barkan, J. (1998). *Splish! Splash!* New York: Random House.

Awdry, W. (1990). *Thomas the tank engine says goodnight*. New York: Random House.

Brown, M. (1997). *Say the magic word*. New York: Random House.

Children's Television Workshop. (1992). *Ernie's bath book*. New York: Random House.

Crozat, F. (1996). *I am a little hedgehog*. New York: Barron's.

Gleeson, K. (1994). *Yum! Yum!* New York: Western Publishing Company.

Hoban, T. (1999). *What is it?* New York: Greenwillow Books.

Lamut, S. (1997). *1 2 Peek a boo*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

Potter, B. (1994). *My Peter Rabbit cloth book/My Tom Kitten cloth book*. London: Penguin Books.

Touch and Feel Books

Boynton, S. (1998). *Dinosaur's binkit*. New York: Little Simon.

Campbell, R. (1996). *Cuddle feelies*. New York: Random House.

Hill, E. (1997). *Spot's touch and feel day*. New York: Putnam.

Kunhardt, D. (1984). *Pat the bunny/cat/puppy*. New York: Golden Books.

Milne, A. A., & Shepard, E. H. (1998). *Pooh's touch and feel visit*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.

For Preschool and Primary Children

Classic and Traditional Books

Bemelmans, L. (1939). *Madeline.* New York: Viking.

Berenstain, S., & Berenstain, J. (1966). *The bear's picnic.* New York: Random House.

Berenstain, J., & Berenstain, S. (1971). *Bears in the night.* New York: Random House.

Berenstain, S., & Berenstain, J. (1987). *The Berenstain bears and too much birthday.* New York: Random House.

Brown, M. (1942). *Goodnight moon.* New York: Harper.

Burton, V. L. (1943). *Katy and the big snow.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Cannon, J. (1993). *Stellaluna.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.

Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar.* New York: Philomel.

Cauley, L. (1982). *The three little kittens.* New York: Putnam.

Curtis, J. L. (1996). *Tell me again about the night I was born.* New York: HarperCollins.

DePaola, T. (1973). *Charlie needs a clock.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

DePaola, T. (1978). *The popcorn book.* New York: Holliday House.

DePaola, T. (1996). *Little polar bear, take me home!* New York: North-South Books.

DePaola, T. (1975). *Stregna Nona: An old tale.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

DePaola, T. (1985). *Tomie de Paola's Mother Goose.* New York: Putnam.

Eastman, P. D. (1960). *Are you my mother?* New York: Random House.

Freeman, D. (1968). *Corduroy.* New York: Viking.

Galdone, P. (1973). *The little red hen.* New York: Scholastic.

Galdone, P. (1973). *The three bears.* New York: Scholastic.

Galdone, P. (1985). *Cat goes fiddle-I-fee.* New York: Clarion.

Hill, E. (1982). *Where's Spot?* New York: Putnam.

Hoban, R. (1969). *Best friends for Frances.* New York: Harper & Row.

Holdsworth, W. (1968). *The gingerbread boy.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

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Chickadee. Young Naturalist Foundation, 17th and M Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (ages 4-8)

Cricket. Open Court Publishing Co., Box 100, La Salle, IL 6130 (ages 6-12)

The Dinosaur Times. CSK Publications/B & W Publications, 500 S Buena Vista Street, Suite 101, Burbank, CA 91521-6018 (all ages)

Highlights for Children, 803 Church Street, Honesdale, PA 18431 (ages 2-12)

Community Resources

Libraries

Community-based	Government-based	School-based
Faith-based	Museum-based	University-based

Assessment Resources

Local school district	Health department
Social services agencies	Easter Seal Society
Pediatricians	University Laboratory Schools
University Departments:	
Psychology	Speech and Language
Speech Therapy	Child Development
Early Childhood Education	School Psychology
School Counseling	Social Work

Parent Literacy Programs

After-School Programs	Head Start Early Childhood Programs
Child-Care Centers	
Even Start Community Programs	Library-Sponsored Literacy Programs
School-Based Literacy Programs	

Computer Resources

Software and Web Sites

Preschool Parade — Nordic Software– Children work with clowns and animals to learn the alphabet, counting, shapes, and more

Storybook Maker Deluxe — Jostens Learning Corp.– Young children use this program to create stories, edit work, illustrate, and read.

Kid's Web — http://www.ucalgary.ca/-dkbrown/stories.html

This page contains information related to art, drama, computers, literature, music, science, social studies, games, and sports. Good for web-based research.

Online Stories for Students — http://www.ucalgary.ca/-dkbrown/stories.html

This web page offers illustrated books and stories online for free in a variety of themes.

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